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## ARE THERE MACCABEAN PSALMS? I.

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Among the critical questions which students of the Old Testament have been called upon to answer, is the one in reference to the Maccabean Psalms. "Are there Maccabean Psalms?" This has been answered, as all critical questions have, both in the affirmative and negative. Men equally renowned for their scholarship have taken opposite sides of this question. Some would place a large number of the Psalms in this period, others again maintain that the arguments are conclusive against placing any at so late a date.

It is in a spirit of honest inquiry after the truth in this question that this investigation has been undertaken. The first task will be to determine, if possible, whether it is possible on external grounds for Maccabean Psalms to exist. This will be followed by a consideration of a few special Psalms.

It will be necessary to give a sketch of the chief events of the Maccabean Struggle before we shall be in a position to discuss the question itself.

Antiochus IV., commonly known as Antiochus Epiphanes (The Illustrious) came to the throne of Syria, 175 B. C. As soon as he came to power the Hellenizing party at Jerusalem began to take measures to secure his favor and assistance. Jason, brother of the High Priest Onias III., persuaded the king to bestow the priesthood on him, and at the same time bought permission to carry out his purpose of habituating the Jews to Greek customs. Three years later he was supplanted by Menelaus, whom he had sent to Antiochus with the price of his office. The king, filled with great ambition and bent on obtaining glory by force of arms, turned his attention towards Egypt, whither he made an expedition in 171 B. C., followed by three successive campaigns in the ensuing years. He was successful in his undertaking, but his ambition was checked by the interference of the Romans.

On his return from the second Egyptian campaign, he made an expedition against Jerusalem. Jason had made an attack on the city, and Menelaus persuaded the king that it was meant as an insurrection against his kingly authority. The king seemed willing to believe the report, and so resolved to punish the city. The Temple was plundered as a consequence, and a great number of the people were massacred. He also left a Phrygian Governor with Menelaus. (The account of this may be found in 1 Macc. 1: 20ff., and 2 Macc. 5: 1ff.).

Two years later, at the end of the fourth Egyptian campaign, the king sent a force under Apollonius to occupy Jerusalem and fortify it. This was accompanied by many acts of tyranny. On the 15th of the month Chisleu, the Eagle of Jupiter was placed on the Altar of Burnt Offering; and ten days later he offered up swine on the Altar, an act of the greatest abomination to the pious Jew. The Jews were compelled to forsake the worship of Jehovah for that of the idols; the people of every village were forced to raise idol altars, and offer up swine as burnt offering. They were forbidden to circumcise their sons. Many were cruelly punished for disobeying these laws. All copies of The Law found were confiscated, and their possessors put to death.

Opposition arose, not at Jerusalem, where there was a strong Hellenizing influence, but at Modin, a town in the country. When the emissaries of the king came thither under Apelles to enforce the king's decrees, the priest, Mattathias, refused to obey his command to offer up idolatrous sacrifice; and when an apostate Jew came forward to do so, Mattathias in his zeal rushed forward, slew him and the general Apelles, and overthrew the idol altar. He then fled (168 B. C.) to the mountains with his sons, and there they were joined by others. The enemy, knowing their scruples in reference to the Sabbath, made an attack on them on a certain Sabbath, and slew many of them, since the people would not violate the Law by fighting on this day. Upon this Mattathias gave command that thereafter, if it was necessary, they could fight on the Sabbath.

This incident indicates the spirit of these people. Men

imbued with such a high moral and religious spirit, when aroused by persecution to the defense of their country and religion, prove formidable adversaries. There could only be one natural outcome to such a contest, that was freedom.

In 167 B. C., Mattathias died and was succeeded by his son Judas surnamed Maccabeus. He carried on the war with vigor, and was enabled to gain possession of Jerusalem, 165 B. C., in consequence of a great victory over Lysias, general of Antiochus. He thoroughly purified the Temple on the 25th of the month Chisleu; then followed a feast for eight days. In 164 Antiochus died, but the war was carried on under his son Antiochus Eupator. He was slain by Demetrius, 162, who succeeded him. He sent an army against Judas and attempted to enter into negotiations with him and his brothers. Not being able to get them into his power, as they were too cautious for him, he treacherously slew sixty of the Scribes sent as a delegation to him by their brethren. In 161, Judas gained a great victory over Nicanor, general of Demetrius, but soon after this, in the same year, he was defeated and slain by Bacchides. He was succeeded by his youngest brother Jonathan, "The Wary," who gained success for his party, Bacchides being compelled to come to terms with him, 158 B. C. After various conflicts he was treacherously slain by Tryphon, 144 B. C., who was jealous of his influence and feared that he would prove an obstacle to his designs on the throne of Syria.

His brother Simon succeeded him, and was able to keep the Syrians in check. In 138 B. C. he made terms of agreement with Demetrius II., who acknowledged the independence of the Jews. In 135 B. C. he was assassinated by his son-in-law. John Hyrcanus, one of his sons, succeeded him, and carried on the defense, being at length successful. He died in 105 B. C., and his son Aristobulus I. followed him. He was the first of this house to assume the title of king. Alexander Jannaeus, a born soldier, next came to the throne, and on his death, 79 B. C. his widow Alexandra succeeded him, and reigned till the year 70 B. C.

But the glory of the period had already departed. Intolerance and corruption arose to mar the splendid achievements

of the early Maccabean heroes. We are not, however, to lose sight of the heroism of those who offered their lives so readily for their country and religion, and this in the face of fearful odds.

Now it is just such experiences as these that call forth the deepest feelings of a people in poetry and song, and so it is asked, would it not be wonderful if this struggle had left no trace of itself in the religious songs of the Temple? Is it not reasonable that we should have some Psalms in our collection dating from this period?

Let us now examine the arguments of those who answer this question in the negative.

1. It is said that the Canon was closed before the Maccabean period, and so no Psalms could have come in at so late a date.

In reply it is said that there is nothing to show that the Canon was actually closed before the times of the Maccabees. This brings up the question of the Canon. As the question when the Canon began to be collected does not concern us here, we shall not take it up. All the authorities agree that its formation was a gradual process.

We know that in all probability the Canon of the Old Testament in the time of Christ was the same as we have it now. So the Canon must have been closed some time before this, and that is about as definite a conclusion as we can arrive at. The earliest external evidence to the collection as a whole is found in the prologue to the Greek translation of the Wisdom of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), where "the Law and the Prophets, and the rest of the books" are referred to. But this does not show that the collection was closed at that time. The date of this translation is given by Murray as about the middle of the second century B. C.\*

The persecution of Antiochus resulted in giving the Jews a higher conception of the value of the books of the Old Testament. From 1 Macc. 1: 56ff., we learn that the king sought out the books of the law and burnt them, and that the possession of one of these books was considered a capital

\*See Driver's Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, pp. xxiiiff.

crime. So as far as the Scriptures are concerned, this persecution must have rendered them more precious to the pious Jews, and have directed their attention more closely to them; and so in 2 Macc. 2: 14, it is stated that Judas made a collection of all the Sacred Writings, which were lost. This is a significant statement.

There seems no reasonable ground for saying that the Canon was closed before the Maccabean period, because we do not have sufficient data to determine this.\* In fact many regard the book of Daniel in its present form as a production of this period. If this be so, there can certainly be no objection to Maccabean Psalms so far as external grounds are concerned.

It has been stated that the decision of the Maccabean Psalm question is the chief factor in settling the date when the Canon was closed. In other words, we have two unknown quantities, and so are unable to use one of them to solve the other.

2. Another objection to Maccabean Psalms is brought forward from the Septuagint. In this translation we have the Psalter just about as it is in the Hebrew version. Now, it is maintained by some that the Septuagint was translated before the time of the Maccabees. If this be so, it ends the Maccabean hypothesis. But here, as in the question of the Canon, there is much uncertainty. The history of this translation is involved in obscurity, though Jewish tradition is not wanting in its fanciful stories as to its origin. We can thus set this objection aside without further consideration.

3. Another argument against Maccabean Psalms is from 1 Chron. 16. But this is also an unsatisfactory argument, as the others already noticed, though Ewald attaches much weight to it. In this chapter is found a Psalm, which is made up from extracts from several Psalms,† which are now found in the Psalter and ending (v. 36) with the concluding doxology of the Fourth Book of the Psalter (Ps. 106: 48). And so on the supposition that the doxology was not added

\* See Driver's Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 365.

† Cf. 1 Chron. 16: 8-22 with Psalm 105: 1-15; 1 Chron. 16: 23-33 with Psalm 96: 2-13; 1 Chron. 16: 34-36 with Psalm 106: 47-48.

until the whole Psalter had been completed and divided into books, it is argued that the Book of the Psalms, as we have it, must have been closed before the time of the Chronicler, and if so it excludes the possibility of Maccabean Psalms.

But here again, we have to deal with much uncertainty, some maintaining that Chronicles has the original copy, and that the Psalter has borrowed from it. The Chronicler composes a song for a "past that is dead." Others, as Reuss, consider the whole passage (verses 8-36) as a subsequent interpolation. We do not have enough evidence to determine the question positively. And so if it can be shown on internal grounds that some Psalms can be most naturally explained by referring them to the period of this struggle, this passage in 1 Chron. 16: 8-36 is not of sufficient weight to forbid us assigning them to this later date.

Before beginning a consideration of special Psalms, it may be well to notice the three positions that different critics hold on this question.

1. That represented by Ewald, Bleek, Hengstenberg. Of these, let us take Ewald as a representative. He believes that there were different collections of the Psalms, by different men, each collection being made independently. The first of these collections was probably made in the tenth century B. C. The last, embracing Psalms 90-150, was made at the earliest times of the New Jerusalem. He thinks that the whole history of the Canon is opposed to Maccabean Psalms, and that there can be little doubt that the whole of the present Psalter was taken into the Canon before the end of the fifth century B. C. This is confirmed by 2 Macc. 2: 13, where it is stated that Nehemiah made a collection of writings including those of David. He lays great stress on the argument from 1 Chron. 16: 8-36, which we have already alluded to. Ewald is one of the most uncompromising opponents of the Maccabean hypothesis.

2. The position taken by Hitzig, Olshausen, Graetz, Cheyne. Of this school of critics let us take Olshausen as representative. The reference in many of the Psalms is to the Congregation of Israel, not to individuals. From the beginning they were designed for public worship. It is seen

that very few contain specific historical references. This is not to be wondered at, considering their purpose for liturgical use. Viewing the collection as a whole, we find a similarity running through it, both as to its form and the condition of the nation. Israel has not only to struggle against outside enemies, but against the enemies of Jehovah within. And in some places these two are so indented that it is difficult to determine whether the reference is to the foreigners or to the wicked within the nation itself. Taking this view, there is only one time in the history of the nation when these conditions hold true, and that is in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. Not only the general, but also the particular, representations in the Psalms are answered in this period of history.

In reference to the history of the origin of the collection perhaps it is as follows:— (1) The early Israelitish songs with but few exceptions were crowded out in the Maccabean period, by those which would more exactly express the sentiment of the pious Israelites. (2) The first three books contain songs which refer to the early and most unhappy period of the struggle with Syria. Among these, however, are several Psalms which must be pre-exilic, and refer to the kings, e. g., Psalms 2, 20, 21. (3) This gradual growth of the Psalter may have continued to the time of John Hyrcanus; up to the first years of his reign some of the Psalms seem to go, and perhaps the collection was brought to a close by him.

The view of Olshausen shows to what an extreme criticism may be carried, and how a theory may be built up on but slight foundation. His whole theory has been built up on the alleged conflicts between the righteous and the wicked; but as Ewald points out, these words are found not only in Job and Proverbs, but also in the prophetic writings. Graetz, who belongs to the same school as Olshausen, also acknowledges that the opposition of the righteous and wicked cannot be considered a strong enough argument, since this existed also in the earlier pre-exilic period.

3. We next notice a class, represented by such commentators as Delitzsch and Perowne, who on this question take a middle position between the two classes already considered.



Their position can be briefly stated. The history of the Canon does not exclude the possibility of Maccabean Psalms, although 1 Chron. 16: 36 shows that in the time of the Chronicler the Psalter as a whole was divided into five parts; still it might remain open for later insertions. But if there are Maccabean Psalms in the Psalter, they must be few, because they must have been inserted in a collection already arranged. The history of the Canon is also against it.

Delitzsch thinks that, granting the possibility of Maccabean Psalms, there could have been none after the time of Judas, since the Maccabean movement degenerated from his time. That it is morally impossible, from all that we know of Alexander Jannæus, that he could have been the author of the first and second Psalms, as Hitzig maintains, or that he closed the Canon.

Having considered the main external arguments on this question, it remains to consider some of the more probable Maccabean Psalms, taking the position of Delitzsch and Perowne that this question is an open one.\*

#### PSALM 44.

This Psalm is supposed by many authorities, including Calvin, to refer to the Maccabean times.

The following particulars are to be kept in mind: (a)

\*The attention of the reader is called to the latest utterances of Prof. Cheyne on this question in the Bampton Lectures for 1889, which have been recently published (*The Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter*, by T. K. Cheyne, M. A., D. D. Thos. Whittaker, New York. 1891.) This is probably the best work in English on the Psalms from the radical standpoint. He starts with Books IV. and V. of the Psalter and seeks to determine the dates of the different Psalms contained in them, and then argues back from these to the dates of the earlier Psalm collections. The result he arrives at is that all the Psalms except the 18th are post-exilic. His tests for Maccabean Psalms are as follows:—“(1) some fairly distinct allusions to Maccabean circumstances; (2) an uniquely strong church feeling; (3) a special intensity of montheistic faith; (4) an ardor of gratitude for a wondrous deliverance.” (pp. 16 and 95.) This latter test has to be modified in the case of the Psalms (e. g. 44, 74, and 79) which refers to the earlier and more unhappy portion of this period. According to these criteria he assigns the following Psalms to this period:—20, 21, 33, 44, 60, 61, 63, 74, 79, 83, 101, 108, 115-118, 135-138, 145-147?, 148-150. Prof. Cheyne's treatment of the subject is very interesting and suggestive, but after a careful consideration of his work, the writer does not feel justified in accepting his conclusions. The facts he has presented do not seem sufficiently to warrant the radical opinions he has adopted.

The conquest of the Promised Land is represented here as in the distant past, "in the days of old" (v. 1). (b) The period is one of great national misfortune. The people are hard pressed by their enemies. (c) These misfortunes are not the manifestations of a Divine judgment, on account of the sins of the nation (vs. 17 and 18). The nation was loyal in its worship to Jehovah.

It is maintained that in these particulars this Psalm harmonizes well with the Maccabean times. The following are some of the arguments in favor of this view: (1) There is no time known, previous to the exile, when it was true that the people did not "spread forth their hands to a strange god" (v. 20). And so it is referred by some to the expedition of Antiochus against Jerusalem on his return from Egypt, and the slaughter of the Jews at that time. Other situations in the Maccabean times, as after the death of Judas, have been thought more in harmony with the spirit of the Psalm. This fact we know, that during the Maccabean period the nation was free from idolatry, and yet underwent great suffering. (2) Vs. 11 and 12 of this Psalm harmonize well with 2 Macc., 5 : 11ff., where it is stated that forty thousand of the Jews were slain and as many more taken and sold. Others, however, think the language of these verses is not to be taken literally, but as language natural to poetry, e. g., Cheyne. (3) In the passage vs. 17-22 the expression "for thy sake are we killed all the day long" (vs. 22, cf. Jer. 15 : 15; Is. 66 : 5) seems to refer to a religious persecution, and that the people were martyrs for their faith. This harmonizes best with the Maccabean times, since this was the only period, so far as we know, in which the nation as a whole so suffered. In reply to this, it is said that the language of v. 22 may not refer to a religious persecution, as it could refer equally well to any sufferings endured in the service of God (cf. 1 Sam. 17 : 45, Is. 10 : 9ff., 36 : 18ff., 37 : 4, 10ff). Further, this hostility to Israel on account of their exclusiveness, existed all along. The persecution in the time of Antiochus was only the culmination of this spirit of hostility. On the other hand, we may say, even on this supposition, it is hard to find a time previous to the Maccabean

period when the language of verse 18, "Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;" could with propriety be applied to the nation as a whole. (4) The spirit of conscious innocence set forth in this Psalm can be most satisfactorily explained by the situation of the "Saints" who fell as martyrs in the Maccabean struggle. In 1 Macc. 1: 64, as in this Psalm, we find their lament over the misfortunes God was bringing on them in his wrath.

This Psalm has been assigned to other periods in Jewish history as follows:—(1) Ewald places it in the times of post-exilic Jerusalem. But a great objection to this date is that we have no record in this period of any disaster that would naturally call out such a Psalm. And so Delitzsch says that this view is inadmissible. (2) Tholuck refers this Psalm to the time of Jehoiachin (2 Chron. 36: 9 cf. Jer. 22: 20-30; Ezek. 19). But this time seems equally inappropriate. (3) Others assign it to the time of Jehoshaphat. Others, again, think its contents favor the early part of Jehoram's reign, when there was no idolatry in the land, yet the people were subjected to misfortunes. The Philistines and Arabs (2 Chron. 21: 16ff cf. Joel 1: 2-8) made an inroad into Judah and Jerusalem and not only ransacked the city but also sold the captives to the Greeks. But the reply is made to this, that this was a well merited punishment for their sins during this reign. The view that this Psalm was written at a later date, in reference to this occasion, seems equally inadmissible, as the language evidently refers to a present condition,—the people have but recently suffered a defeat. (4) This Psalm has also been assigned to the Syro-Ammonitish war in the time of David (cf. Psalm 60, which Delitzsch assigns to the same period). When David was contending with the Syrians, the Edomites came down and from 1 Kings 11: 15 it is evident that they caused much bloodshed. And so it is thought by some that this Psalm was called forth by these distressing circumstances, before the Edomites were overthrown.

But a strong objection against these views is this: The language of the Psalm seems to imply more than a sudden attack, such as these were. The language rather implies a

more serious and lasting misfortune. It is not enough to say that the Jewish people were so conscious of the Divine election, and of salvation resulting from it, that even a small defeat made a great impression on them. The language of the Psalm implies more than an ordinary disaster, unless there is a very great exaggeration of statement. But this argument from poetical exaggeration is often a convenient method of avoiding a difficulty, and while we must make due allowance for this element in a poetic description, we are not to carry the principle too far. So, all things considered, it seems most reasonable to refer this Psalm to the times of the Maccabean struggle. There is no other period that answers so well to the condition of affairs described in it. Calvin says that it is very clear that it was composed by another person than by David. We have the tradition that this Psalm was used as a daily lament in the time of the Maccabees. The Levites daily ascended the pulpit and uttered the cry: "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord!" (v. 23), This shows, at least, that this Psalm was considered very suitable to express the feelings of the people in their distress.